

Twelve Roses by **theamiableanachronism**

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Summary: Eleven makes it a point to celebrate Valentine's Day. Twelve points, in fact.

Twelve Roses

According to Joyce, Valentine's Day is a day to show the people you love how much you love them, and that one of the ways to show them is with cards or flowers. So, after seeing the soft, deep-red roses in all the stores around Hawkins, Eleven decides that all the people she loves should get the same.

After school on Valentine's Day, she bikes straight to the florist's and buys twelve roses. The next half hour is spent sitting on her bed tying carefully-crafted red paper hearts with messages written in white pencil ("To _ Happy Valentine's Day Love, El") to the stems with pink ribbon.

She gives the first one to Joyce, sitting at the table smoking a cigarette while paying bills and looking more than a little stressed, trying to finish before Hopper picks her up for their date. She gathers El into her arms and tenderly strokes her curls before pulling away, wiping a few tears away from her eyes.

The next one is given to Jonathan, in his room getting ready for his date with Nancy, the Clash blaring so loudly that knocking on the door does nothing and El has to tap him on the arm to get his attention. He gives her an awkward hug and touched smile and sets the rose in a place of honor on his nightstand so he can see it when he wakes up.

Next is Will, across the hallway in his room, drawing before Jonathan drives he and El over to Mike's for a sleepover (since none of the kids ever have plans for Valentine's Day). He gives her the biggest and sweetest smile and throws his arms around her before running to get a glass of water for the flower.

They make two stops before Mike's: first, Steve's house, where his reaction to getting a ROSE from El is a surprised laugh and an "Aww thanks, kid!" before ruffling her curly hair and waving to Will and Jonathan waiting in the car. Second, the station, where El and Will run into Hopper's office and around his desk to attack him with a hug. He takes El's rose with a husky thank-you and kiss to her temple before getting up from his desk to grab an empty vase from the top of

the file cabinet which he then fills with water and rose, setting it carefully on his desk next to the framed family pictures and last-minute work he's finishing up before his date with Joyce.

Finally, they arrive at Mike's house and Jonathan walks them to the door, holding his own bouquet of red roses behind his back. Karen answers and accepts El's rose with a touched smile, placing a hand over her heart, then pulling El to her so she can plant a kiss on top of her head. Holly gets a Valentine note tied around a lollipop, and even Ted gets a rose (that is still next to the La-Z-Boy two weeks later in a tiny vase). Nancy comes down the stairs, putting on one last earring, and lets out a small "Oh!" when El hands her her rose. El gets another hug and a kiss on the cheek, leaving a faint lipstick stain that Nancy gently wipes away. As Nancy runs to put her thirteen roses in some water, Mike bounds out of the basement (unbeknownst to El and Will, having practically sprinted up the stairs when he heard the front door open) and takes them back down to the basement where Lucas and Dustin and Max are waiting impatiently at the now-much-larger D&D table. Before following Will down, El hands Mike his rose and his face quickly colors to match the crimson petals. He mumbles a shy thank-you and furtively glances down into the basement where he hopes the cheers greeting Will's arrival are enough to distract them from the quick kiss he places on El's rosy cheek. He is wrong and the cheers become loud "AWWW"s, and El's smile is the only thing keeping him from shouting a "Shut up!" down the stairs.

Lucas, Dustin, and Max each get one of the last three roses and envelop El in a group hug that quickly encompasses Mike and Will too.

They spend the rest of the evening finishing the campaign and stay up into the wee hours eating candy from the Valentines they gave each other earlier that day at school, Lucas all the while asking Mike if he's the one who writes the sappy messages on all the conversation hearts. Once everyone else is asleep, Mike pulls out another larger valentine for El, a crooked heart cut out of pink construction paper with lace glued around the edges and a long message written on the reverse side. El proclaims it very pretty and thanks Mike with a gentle hug, sliding the heart under her pillow so it won't get lost or swiped by Max or Lucas the next morning to (good-naturedly) tease

Mike over. The last thing she sees as she falls asleep is the four roses lying on the D&D table in front of the owners' respective places, conversation hearts and pink, red, and white candy wrappers scattered around them. She smiles and falls asleep, surrounded by six of the twelve people she loves most in the world.